

# **NORTH CAROLINA GENERAL ASSEMBLY**



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## **HOUSE STUDY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION INNOVATION (2013)**

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### **REPORT TO THE 2014 SESSION of the 2013 GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA**

**APRIL 23, 2014**

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# TRANSMITTAL LETTER

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April 30, 2014

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TO THE MEMBERS OF THE 2014 REGULAR SESSION  
OF THE 2013 GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The HOUSE STUDY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION INNOVATION (2013),  
respectfully submits the following report to the 2014 Regular Session of the 2013 General  
Assembly.

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Rep. D. Horn (Co-Chair)

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Rep. Susan Martin (Co-Chair)

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# COMMITTEE PROCEEDINGS

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The House Study Committee on Education Innovation (2013) met five times after the 2013 Regular Session. The following is a brief summary of the Committee's proceedings. Detailed minutes and information from each Committee meeting are available in the Legislative Library.

## **December 18, 2013**

The House Study Committee on Education Innovation held its first meeting on December 18, 2013, at 1:00 p.m. in Room 643 of the Legislative Office Building in Raleigh, North Carolina. Co-Chair Horn presided, and other committee members present were: Representatives Brian Brown; Tricia Cotham; Nelson Dollar; Jeffrey Elmore; Edward Hanes, Jr.; Marvin Lucas; Dennis Riddell; and Phil Shepard; along with public members: Mr. Sean Bulson; Dr. Sue Burgess; Dr. Mark Edwards; Mr. Dale Cole; Mr. George Little; and Ms. Anna Spangler Nelson.

The Committee began its work by reviewing the Committee Charge and then heard presentations from four groups on how their respective organizations are utilizing innovative practices in education designed to improve student achievement leading to college and career readiness.

### **The North Carolina Virtual Public School (NCVPS)**

Dr. Tracy Weeks, Chief Academic Officer and Executive Director of NCVPS, reviewed some of the innovative practices NCVPS has utilized over the seven years of its existence, including: its unique ability to serve students in all 115 school districts, as well as 57 charter schools, and non-public students and offer over 140 courses; offering credit recovery classes for students who have failed a course and need to take it again; offering an occupational course of study program for students with severe learning disabilities; partnering with districts to teach blended STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) courses in the classroom and online; and a peer tutoring program where students can assist each other. A challenge for NCVPS is expansion: currently only high school classes are offered and Dr. Weeks would like to expand course offerings to middle school students as well.

### **The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (DPI)**

Dr. Rebecca Garland, Chief Academic Officer at DPI, reviewed some of the innovative practices DPI is currently implementing throughout the State, including: Career and College Promise, a dual enrollment program in which juniors and seniors may enroll in classes at a community college while still in high school; expanding opportunities for students interested in career and technical education through Work Keys and earning certifications such as Microsoft; promoting new types of academies focused on different types of learning, including STEM and STEAM academies, leadership academies, and global schools; and continuing to promote technology and 1:1 initiatives.

### **North Carolina New Schools**

Mr. Tony Habit, President of North Carolina New Schools, stated New Schools began in 2003 dedicated to promoting early college high schools through collaboration with the University

System, Community College System, and DPI. North Carolina now leads the country in the development of early college high school models. New Schools has also been involved with the creation of the Northeast Regional School of Biotechnology and Agriscience and the Yadkin Valley Regional Career Academy. Mr. Habit thought challenges hindering innovation in education included the lack of high quality professional development and support for teachers, as well as a need to deepen the connection between secondary institutions and high-growth sectors of the economy to better align education with workforce needs.

#### The University of North Carolina General Administration

Dr. Steven Brooks, Executive Director with the State Education Assistance Authority (SEAA), reviewed an innovative and collaborative effort SEAA has been involved with since 2000 with the implementation of CFNC.org, an interactive website that allows students to plan, apply, and pay for college, as well as plan high school courses and transfer credits between community colleges and the university system, plan and explore careers and most recently, use the website for peer-to-peer discussions. CFNC has become the gold standard across the nation for college access portals and has been copied in other states.

Ms. Melissa Thibault with the North Carolina School of Science and Math (NCSSM) reviewed their innovative efforts which began with the establishment of the unique residential school over 30 years ago and continues with their ongoing distance and online outreach efforts, including serving non-resident students throughout the State using Interactive Video Conferencing and online classes.

Ms. Nora Reynolds, Executive Director of Continual Learning at UNC-Greensboro, reviewed the UNCG iSchool, a unique and innovative dual enrollment opportunity where high school students could take university general education courses. Over 15,000 students from all 100 counties took advantage of this opportunity when it was funded. Ms. Reynolds stated this type of innovative practice requires robust technical support and well-trained facilitators.

Dr. Alisa Chapman, Vice President for Academic and University Programs, UNC General Administration, closed the presentation with a review of ongoing innovative efforts by The University System, including MOOC (Massive Open Online Courses) course offerings, flipped classroom models, partnering with early college high schools across the State, and a study on teacher quality research which was in the final stages of its study. Dr. Chapman suggested the Committee may be interested in hearing more about the findings of the teacher quality research study at a later meeting.

#### **January 22, 2014**

The House Study Committee on Education Innovation held its second meeting on January 22, 2014, at 1:00 p.m. at Project L.I.F.T. Academy, 2670 Dr. Carver Road, Charlotte, North Carolina. Co-Chair Susan Martin presided, and other committee members present were: Co-Chair Craig Horn; Representatives Marcus Brandon; Tricia Cotham; Edward Hanes, Jr.; Marvin Lucas; Dennis Riddell; and Phil Shepard; along with public members: Mr. Sean Bulson; Dr. Sue Burgess; Ms. Ann Goodnight; and Ms. Anna Spangler Nelson.



Preceding the 1:00 meeting, the Committee toured two Project L.I.F.T. schools: Druid Hills Academy at 2801 Lucena Street, Charlotte, North Carolina at 10:00 a.m. and Ransom IB Middle School at 5850 Statesville Road, Charlotte, North Carolina at 11:00 a.m.

The Committee heard presentations from three local school administrative units on how their respective districts are utilizing innovative practices in education to improve student achievement leading to college and career readiness.

#### Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools: Project L.I.F.T.

Ms. Diamond Morris, a senior at L.I.F.T. Academy, addressed the Committee with a firsthand account of her unique experiences as a student in the L.I.F.T. program.

Mr. Stick Williams, L.I.F.T. board member, addressed the Committee with an overview of the program's history and goals and introduced Ms. Denise Watts, Community Superintendent, Project L.I.F.T. Learning Community, Charlotte-Mecklenburg. Ms. Watts credited the success of L.I.F.T. to the unique public-private partnership of 19 philanthropic organizations and nine schools in West Charlotte that have historically faced high poverty, low graduation rates and test scores, low parent involvement, and high teacher turnover. Ms. Watts reviewed the innovative efforts the L.I.F.T. partnership has implemented to combat these problems, including: calendar flexibility and extended learning days; technology initiatives such as 1:1 laptop ratios for students and a partnership with Microsoft to provide affordable devices and internet connectivity to families of L.I.F.T. students; and the use of text messaging to communicate news to parents.

#### Gaston County Schools

Mr. W. Jeffrey Booker, Superintendent with Gaston County Schools, stated the district has had a particular interest in vocational and technical education due to their manufacturing base. One of their most notable innovative efforts was the establishment of the Highland School of Technology, which opened in 2000, has had a 100% graduation rate for the last five years, and contains the first Apple lab and robotics lab in the State. Another best practice of the district is the use of the LEAP program (Leading Education and Preparing), a government funded initiative that utilizes social workers, intervention specialists, and mental health clinicians to focus on high-risk students. In particular, the LEAP program in Gaston has focused on closing an achievement gap in male fourth grade students that was discovered based on third grade test scores. Mr. Booker also stated that Gaston hosts an annual Teacher and Learning Conference which has proven to be a helpful learning experience for the district's teachers in both public and private schools. Mr. Booker addressed three challenges to education innovation facing Gaston: technical accessibility, adequately funding teachers and support staff, and aging infrastructure.

#### Union County Schools

Dr. Mary Ellis, Superintendent of Union County Schools, began her remarks by stating that innovative efforts that work with one school system may not work in another and urged the Committee to not use a "one size fits all approach." Dr. Ellis highlighted some of the successful innovative practices Union County has implemented over the last few years, including: the creation of 20 unique academies focused on areas of particular student interest (for example, mass media broadcasting, public safety, and forensic science); and emphasizing the need for digital devices for every student which they have worked to obtain by using federal PRC 061 money to buy computers. Dr. Ellis also stated Union County had a large number of teen parents and stressed the importance of keeping pregnant and parenting students in school,

noting the system had worked hard to support this vulnerable group by using social workers and creating initiatives like a Certified Nursing Assistant Academy so students could graduate with marketable skills. Dr. Ellis stated a challenge for Union County teachers was the elimination of masters pay and the need for teachers to feel they should continue to grow as professionals.

### **February 19, 2014**

The House Study Committee on Education Innovation held its third meeting on February 19, 2014, at 1:00 p.m. in Room 643 of the Legislative Office Building in Raleigh, North Carolina. Co-Chair Craig Horn presided, and other committee members present were: Co-Chair Susan Martin; Representatives Marcus Brandon; Brian Brown; Tricia Cotham; Nelson Dollar; Jeffrey Elmore; Edward Hanes, Jr.; Marvin Lucas; Dennis Riddell; and Phil Shepard; along with public members: Mr. Sean Bulson; Ms. Karyn Dickerson; Ms. Ann Goodnight; Mr. George Little; and Ms. Anna Spangler Nelson.

The Committee heard presentations on innovation in education from three groups: the North Carolina Community College System, The University of North Carolina General Administration, and a panel of the 2012-2013 North Carolina Regional Teachers of the Year.

#### **The Community College System**

Dr. Scott Ralls, President of the North Carolina Community College System, was recognized to present on innovative practices being utilized in the State's 58 community colleges. Dr. Ralls stated that most of the System's innovative practices fell into one of three areas of innovation: technology, academic success, and economic and financial. Highlights of technology innovation included the success and popularity of the System's distance education efforts (55% of course delivery is via distance education), and the creation of the Virtual Learning Community where faculty from different colleges partner to develop online courses and share learning objects that can be used by students and teachers.

Dr. Ralls stated the System has also been very focused on student success initiatives, and as part of their commitment to student access, they conducted a nine-month listening tour across all 58 colleges asking for local innovations to further success. The listening tour has led to the adoption of a statewide program called the Loss Momentum Framework, which is being used as a model in 15 other states. Other initiatives designed to improve student success include: dual enrollment programs for high school students; structured course pathways to guide students to degree completion; the creation of a new program, Basic Skills Plus, which offers students the opportunity to take some skills-related classes while still enrolled in developmental education classes; and, along with The University System, a new comprehensive articulation agreement to assist students in transferring to The University System.

Highlights in economic and financial innovation include structured career pathways to give students employable skills with a two-year degree and matching skills with workforce needs. Dr. Ralls noted that Emily Derocco, Assistant Secretary of Labor for Training and Employment under President Bush, has called the North Carolina Community College System the national leader for structured pathways, stable certifications, and combining redesigns of curriculum with financing strategy. Tiered funding from the General Assembly has been helpful with this initiative because it has given colleges the flexibility to offer programs such as radiography that may be higher in cost and are in higher demand from businesses.

### The University of North Carolina General Administration

Dr. Alisa Chapman, Vice President for Academic and University Programs, UNC General Administration, was recognized to review some of UNC's teacher quality research, their latest teacher portals analysis. Dr. Chapman stated that while teachers are the most important educational resource that can be controlled by our schools, it may be surprising how much the effectiveness of these teachers vary. She stated that this particular analysis was designed to answer how performance of teachers prepared by The UNC system compares to the performance of teachers with other types of preparation (for example, out-of-state programs, Teach for America teachers, or alternative entry teachers). The findings between these two groups of teachers were mixed based on grade level and subject, but other high-level findings included: an overall decline in enrollment in teacher preparation programs; less frequent turnover among teachers prepared by The UNC System and private and independent colleges in the State compared to teachers prepared in another manner; and that first-year teachers are disproportionately represented in the State's lowest performing schools. The overall cost of teacher attrition includes preparation, training, and recruitment, and has been estimated to be as high as \$84.5 million in North Carolina. Beyond monetary costs, high turnover leads to losses in teacher quality, school stability, and student achievement. Dr. Chapman concluded by saying that it is not enough to recruit high-qualified candidates to teach but that the State needs an evidence-based comprehensive approach to retain highly-qualified teachers.

Ms. Elizabeth Cunningham, Director for the North Carolina Teacher Support Program, was recognized to share information about this new initiative which is working to help support novice teachers in an effort to retain high-quality teachers as Dr. Chapman suggested was a best practice. This program offers support through instructional coaching to beginning teachers in the State's highest needs schools through high-quality and on-going support that allows teachers in their first years of practice to develop their skills, impact the students, and remain in the profession. Currently in their second year of full implementation, they are serving 1,150 teachers in 120 schools in 29 districts. The program is administered through the university in the community that is closest to the school and district that they serve. This innovative approach to professional development and mentorship has three unique steps: 1. Trained coaches observe teachers; 2. Coaches return to the classroom with the teachers and help them plan and implement what they learned in their coaching session; and 3. Coaches and teachers have a follow-up session. A formal evaluation of the program has not yet concluded, but teacher feedback to date has been very positive.

Dr. Michael Maher, Assistant Dean for Professional Education and Accreditation at North Carolina State University, was recognized to review a new Teacher Performance Assessment pilot, edTPA. A crucial part of teacher preparation is student teaching, and it is important to assess student teachers as well as teacher preparation programs to ensure they are adequately preparing teachers. This pilot is intended to serve as a valid and reliable instrument to assess how well student teachers can perform basic teaching functions, as well as to educate student teachers and improve teacher preparation programs. Seven UNC Schools of Education (ECU, UNC-CH, WSSU, NCSU, UNCA, UNCC, and WCU) are participating in this pilot to ensure that the edTPA instrument is in fact predicting teacher effectiveness in the classroom as well as helping UNC teaching preparation programs.

### Panel: 2012-2013 Regional Teachers of the Year

Region One: Pamela Mills

Ms. Mills is a graduate of Appalachian State University and has been teaching for 44 years. She is currently teaching eighth grade Language Arts in Dare County. Ms. Mills highlighted some of the innovative efforts occurring in Region One, including: teachers who constantly work together and collaborate to produce the best lessons they can for the students; virtual field trips using distance education tools such as Window to the World and Skype; hands-on programs where AP science students participate as field researchers for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and art students design and build furniture pieces for First Flight Furniture. Ms. Mills stated impediments to innovation included: funding (many of the examples she mentioned were funded by grants/donations and may not continue); lack of time to get used to new standards; and the inability of standardized tests to measure authentic assessments.

#### Region Two: Carrie Morris

Ms. Morris is a graduate of Elon College and has a master's degree from UNC-Wilmington. She has been teaching for 18 years and currently teaches elementary school in Onslow County. Ms. Morris stated she felt that collaboration and building relationships are the keys to improving innovation in the schools. Ms. Morris highlighted innovative efforts related to collaboration, including PLCs (Professional Learning Communities) and teacher-arranged conferences. Ms. Morris also highlighted the new trend of global education which can be seen in language immersion classes, increased numbers of visiting international faculty (VIFs), and global partnerships where districts partner with counterparts in other countries. Ms. Morris stressed impediments to innovation include low teacher morale and teachers feeling that standardized test scores, rather than innovative ideas, are more important for their own evaluations.

#### Region Three: Thomas McGeachy

Mr. McGeachy holds an undergraduate degree from Old Dominion University and a master's degree from Troy University. He entered the teaching profession in 2007 and currently teaches Army ROTC in Halifax County. Mr. McGeachy agreed with Ms. Morris that collaboration is important for innovation. His own school is part of New Schools and the teachers there are leveraging technology to expose students to virtual lab experiments. Mr. McGeachy also tries to increase global awareness through services such as CNN Student News. Impediments to innovation include: bandwidth restrictions; lack of a 1:1 initiative; inadequate digital devices and access for students both at school and at home; and lack of professional development for teachers.

#### Region Four: Shannon Godfrey

Ms. Godfrey holds an undergraduate and master's degree from UNC-CH. She has been teaching for 11 years and currently teaches American History and Social Studies in Harnett County. Ms. Godfrey highlighted innovative efforts in Harnett County, including a 1:1 initiative and Power Block, where the school has revised its lunch and class schedule to add extra time each day for tutorial sessions or study hall, depending on a student's needs. Ms. Godfrey stated that impediments to innovation include: inflexible calendar schedules; lack of professional development on digital learning and technology; and too much emphasis on standardized testing.

#### Region Five: Karyn Dickerson

Ms. Dickerson holds an undergraduate degree from UNC-CH and a master's degree from the University of Glasgow. She is a lateral entry teacher in her eighth year of teaching and teaches high school English in Guilford County. Ms. Dickerson highlighted innovative practices in

Guilford schools such as creative scheduling and a variety of magnet schools, which is a way to offer choice tailoring to interests and needs, as well as an early childhood program that offers teen mothers parenting classes. Ms. Dickerson thought more calendar flexibility would enhance innovation by allowing high schools to be on the same schedule as community colleges and allow students to take first semester exams before winter break. She also suggested public-private partnerships and thought there was too much emphasis on standardized testing.

#### Region Eight: Jill Francis

Ms. Francis holds an undergraduate degree from Appalachian State and a master's degree from East Carolina University via distance education. She is in her 16th year of teaching and currently teaches high school Biology and Environmental Science in Rutherford County. Ms. Francis addressed some of the innovative practices in Rutherford County, including: a 1:1 initiative; online resources which are more accurate and current than textbooks; intensive professional development through her school's technology facilitator; and hands-on science experiments in the community. Ms. Francis stated current obstacles to innovation in schools include: an emphasis on standardized testing; lack of a direct pathway for high school students interested in certain subjects; and lack of dedicated planning time for teachers to think and plan for how to teach in the new inquiry-based fashion.

#### **March 19, 2014**

The House Study Committee on Education Innovation held its fourth meeting on March 19, 2014, at 12:00 p.m. at the Northeast Regional School of Biotechnology and Agriscience, Vernon G. James Research and Extension Center, 207 Research Station Road, Plymouth, North Carolina, 27962. Co-Chair Susan Martin presided, and other committee members present were: Co-Chair Craig Horn and Representative Phil Shepard; along with public members: Mr. Sean Bulson; Dr. Sue Burgess; Ms. Karyn Dickerson; Ms. Ann Goodnight; and Ms. Anna Spangler Nelson.

The Committee heard presentations on innovation in education from five groups: the Northeast Regional School of Biotechnology and Agriscience; the Northeast Leadership Academy; KIPP Gaston College Preparatory; Wayne County Schools; and Warren County Schools.

#### Northeast Regional School of Biotechnology and Agriscience

Mr. Hal Davis, Principal of the Northeast Regional School of Biotechnology and Agriscience, was recognized to highlight some of the innovative practices being used at his school, including: the unique structure of the State's only regional school, which allows students from five local school administrative units to attend; the school's mission statement which prepares students for entry into the workforce or up to two years of college credit after training in a rigorous technology enriched environment; a 1:1 initiative; a 200 day school calendar schedule; and the use of "satellite days" where 12-14 days a year, teachers travel to their students in their home districts.

#### Northeast Leadership Academy (NELA)

Dr. Bonnie Fusarelli, Director of Northeast Leadership Academy, was recognized to highlight some of the innovative efforts of the Academy. Dr. Fusarelli believes innovation in schools begins with the principal and great schools have great leaders.

An alternative to traditional leadership preparation, NELA is an innovative school leader preparation program where recruits graduate after a funded, rigorous 2-year training with a Masters in School Administration and a license to serve as a school administrator. Training

includes intense coaching and a yearlong partnership with a mentor principal. Graduates must commit to a three year post-degree service in one of 14 high needs counties. To date, NELA has produced 7 principals and 26 assistant principals and has over a 90% placement rate of first year graduates. Challenges include funding NELA; the ongoing struggle to place highly trained leaders in places that need change; combatting rural poverty through leadership and placement efforts; and criticisms from traditional leadership preparation programs.

#### KIPP ENC (Eastern North Carolina): KIPP Gaston College Prep (KIPP: GCP)

Ms. Tammi Sutton, Executive Director of KIPP ENC, was recognized to highlight some of the innovative efforts utilized at KIPP GCP, including: a unique mission statement that strives to empower students with the skills and knowledge to succeed at college, strengthen their communities, and fight for social justice; an extended school calendar year (188 days); extended length of school days (8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.); and intense recruitment for students including door-to-door recruitment, home visits, and Family Saturday School. Since its establishment in 2001, nearly half of the founding class has earned a college degree thereby quadrupling the college graduation rates of students from low-income communities who graduate from college within 6 years. Challenges facing KIPP GCP include teacher licensure requirements, increased State testing, and facility debt.

#### Wayne County Schools

Dr. Sandra McCullen, Associate Superintendent, was recognized to highlight some of Wayne County's innovative efforts, including: high numbers of students earning career readiness certificates; being the first county in the State to be designated as a "Work Ready Community"; the establishment and use of early college high schools; the creation of the Wayne School of Engineering at Goldsboro High School; being one of four districts in the State to employ a Military Liaison Counselor to address the needs of military children; using Child and Family Support Teams Grants to identify and coordinate appropriate community services and supports for at-risk children; and using grant money to establish the Wayne Initiative for School Health (WISH) which has worked to reduce school absences and decrease teen pregnancies. Challenges to innovation facing Wayne County Schools include: low teacher morale; the need for Pre-K programs for underserved students; high numbers of English as Second Language students; technology infrastructure needs; and the need to identify military students within PowerSchool.

#### Warren County Schools

Dr. Ray Spain, Superintendent, was recognized to highlight some of Warren County's innovative efforts, including: a school choice initiative where students and parents can choose where 8th graders will attend high school based on the unique focuses of each high school (for example, a focused career interest or an early college high school); required school uniforms to build camaraderie amongst students; and a 8+ program designed for middle school students who are two or more years behind their cohort. The 8+ program is a partnership between Warren County Schools and Edison Learning, and consists of a blended model of instruction incorporating online courses and direct instruction with a focus on core content and few electives. Enrollment in the program requires an interview and a contract between the school, parent, and student. Challenges hindering innovation in Warren County include: teacher retention and recruitment; inflexible school calendar; lack of funding to support reform and innovation; and restrictions on 10th graders taking college courses under Career and College Promise.

**April 23, 2014**

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## FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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Over the course of the first five meetings, the Committee heard from a variety of teachers, principals, and superintendents, as well as institutions of higher education. Based on this input, the Committee makes the following findings and recommendations:

### I. Flexibility

The Committee finds that many of the presenters stressed the importance of flexibility in the public schools. Since 2011, the General Assembly has increased flexibility on the use of funding allotments and the removal of class size restrictions. However, challenges regarding flexibility still remain, most specifically the inflexibility of the school calendar.

Although the General Assembly changed the school calendar law in 2012 to allow schools the flexibility to meet either 185 days or 1,025 instructional hours, the Committee finds that the inflexible start and end dates of the school calendar year is a common obstacle to innovation for schools. The lack of flexibility with the first and last days of the school calendar year results in **three** main concerns:

1. K-12 calendars do not align with the calendars for institutions of higher education which creates difficulty for dual enrollment.
2. The start date of the school year often means that students have to take first semester exams after the winter holidays.
3. **Summer learning loss, particularly for at-risk students.**

An additional frustration facing local school administrative units is that weather-related make-up days often occur on days previously designated for professional development, which often leaves little to no time for professional development during the regularly scheduled school calendar year.

The Committee finds that two of the groups the Committee heard from, Project L.I.F.T. and KIPP-GCP, have attributed some of their success to having longer school days and/or longer school years, and many of the local school administrative units that presented to the Committee have asked for similar calendar flexibility for their own schools.

The Committee recommends further study on the issue of the mandatory start and end dates for the school calendar in order to increase student achievement and consideration of legislation to allow calendar flexibility for specific educational programs.

**See draft legislation entitled 2013-TCz-29.**

### II. Technology

The Committee finds that both distance education and digital learning are innovative methods of delivering education and are on the rise in all levels of education. However, the increased availability and popularity of distance education and digital learning are presenting local school administrative units and individual schools with a new set of obstacles, including: the lack of 1:1 initiatives in every school and district, the lack of reliable Wi-Fi access in all classrooms, the lack of reliable connectivity and/or digital devices in the homes and communities of students, and the need for a technology specialist/facilitator in every school. The Committee finds that some local school administrative units and individual schools have overcome these obstacles through local initiatives, public-private partnerships, and short-term funding solutions such as Race to the Top, while some districts and schools have not yet been able to address these obstacles at the local level. The Committee finds that robust connectivity is essential to learning in the twenty-first century for students at all levels of the educational system and encourages continued work in this area. The Committee encourages local school administrative units and schools to continue seeking out innovative approaches for funding and delivery to meet the needs of distance education and digital learning.

### III. Teaching as a Profession

The Committee finds that teachers are an invaluable resource for student achievement and successful outcomes. The Committee finds that highly effective teachers in the classroom are the most significant factor in the development of innovation in education. However, low teacher morale has led to difficulty recruiting and retaining teachers, particularly in rural areas and in hard-to-staff subjects. The Committee finds that teacher recruitment and retention are crucial to meeting the educational needs and Constitutional responsibilities of the State.

The Committee finds that innovative programs such as UNC's New Teacher Support Program help provide the necessary resources and assistance for beginning teachers as they enter the classroom and embark on their professional journey as educators. The Committee recommends the General Assembly act to remove barriers that prevent the recruitment and retention of highly qualified teachers, including low compensation, lack of quality professional development opportunities, and few options for career advancement. The Committee strongly recommends financial support by the General Assembly for the New Teacher Support Program.

The Committee finds that the current structure for teacher advancement provides limited opportunities within the classroom setting. The Committee finds that teachers indicate that opportunities for advancement within the classroom would be beneficial to retain highly qualified and effective teachers. The Committee finds that innovative methods such as Project L.I.F.T.'s Opportunity Culture provide teachers with the ability to take on additional responsibilities in mentoring roles while continuing to have a direct impact on the classroom. The Committee encourages local boards of education to consider creating advancement options that will continue to keep highly qualified and effective teachers in the classroom.

The Committee also finds that strong leaders produce strong schools. Programs such as the newly created Regional Leadership Academies provide alternative pathways for successful teachers to become effective school administrators. The Committee recommends further study of alternative pathways for administrative licensure, and strongly recommends financial support by the General Assembly for the Regional Leadership Academies.

The Committee finds that collaboration between teachers is critical to successful innovative practices and creation of Professional Learning Communities. Teachers indicate that this collaboration is a necessary component of effective practice. The Committee encourages local school administrative units to provide opportunities that foster and promote collaboration.

The Committee finds that professional development, particularly in the growing area of digital learning, is crucial to the professionalization of the teaching profession. The Committee recommends further study on how to secure and ensure high quality professional development in digital learning for teachers.

#### IV. Current Innovative Practices

The Committee finds that innovation in education is occurring in classrooms throughout the State and in both K-12 schools and institutions of higher education. However, the "best practices" that work for one district, school, or institution of higher education may not work for another. The Committee finds that many innovative methods may not be scalable or replicable throughout the State due to the unique needs of certain areas. The Committee recommends that the State should ensure flexibility for districts, schools, and institutions of higher education to pursue the innovative practices that work for their group respectively, including flexibility with staffing needs, teacher compensation methods, and the school calendar.

The Committee also finds that partnerships with local universities and community colleges such as cooperative innovative high schools are greatly benefiting high school students. The Committee finds that such partnerships help encourage innovation and collaboration with higher education and workforce development.

#### V. Progress and Final Report

In respect to the Committee Charge, the Committee finds its work to date has been informative and members have been exposed to many examples of innovative practices occurring in schools throughout North Carolina. However, the Committee is confident other schools and school districts have more information to share. The Committee plans to resume its study after the conclusion of the short session and will submit a final report for the 2015 General Assembly.

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## COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

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2013-2014

**Speaker of the House of Representatives Appointments:**

Rep. D. Horn (Co-Chair),  
Rep. Susan Martin (Co-Chair)  
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Rep. Nelson Dollar  
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Rep. Dennis Riddell  
Rep. Phillip Shepard  
Mr. Sean Bulson (Public Member)  
Dr. Sue Burgess (Public Member)  
Mr. Dale Cole (Public Member)  
Ms. Karyn Collie Dickerson (Public Member)  
Dr. Mark Edwards (Public Member)  
Ms. Ann Goodnight (Public Member)  
Mr. George Little (Public Member)  
Ms. Anna Spangler Nelson (Public Member)

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## COMMITTEE CHARGE

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Office of Speaker Thom Tillis  
North Carolina House of Representatives  
Raleigh, North Carolina 27601-1096

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### HOUSE STUDY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION INNOVATION

#### TO THE HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE NORTH CAROLINA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

**Section 1.** The House Study Committee on Education Innovation (hereinafter "Committee") is established by the Speaker of the House of Representatives pursuant to G.S. 120-19.6(a1) and Rule 26(a) of the Rules of the House of Representatives of the 2013 General Assembly.

**Section 2.** The Committee consists of \_\_19\_\_ members appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives. The membership of the committee shall include \_\_11\_\_ legislators and \_\_8\_\_ public members as specified below. Members serve at the pleasure of the Speaker of the House of Representatives. The Speaker of the House of Representatives may dissolve the Committee at any time. Vacancies are filled by the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

Representative Craig Horn Co-Chair
Representative Susan Martin Co-Chair
Representative Marcus Brandon
Representative Brian Brown
Representative Tricia Cotham
Representative Nelson Dollar
Representative Jeffrey Elmore
Representative Ed Hanes
Representative Marvin Lucas
Representative Phil Shepard
Representative Dennis Riddell
Mrs. Sue Burgess

Mr. Sean Bulson
Dr. Mark Edwards
Mr. Dale Cole
Ms. Karyn Dickerson
Mrs. Ann Goodnight
Mr. George Little
Mrs. Anna Spangler Nelson

**Section 3.** The Committee may examine and study innovative practices in education designed to improve student achievement leading to college and career readiness, including strategies that incorporate public-private partnerships, alternative learning environments, high-quality professional development for teachers and other school personnel, and community and parent involvement.

**Section 4.** The Committee shall meet upon the call of its Co-Chairs. A quorum of the Committee shall be a majority of its members. No action may be taken except by a majority vote at a meeting at which a quorum is present.

**Section 5.** The Committee, while in the discharge of its official duties, may exercise all powers provided for under G.S. 120-19 and Article 5A of Chapter 120 of the General Statutes.

**Section 6.** Members of the Committee shall receive per diem, subsistence, and travel allowance as provided in G.S. 120-3.1.

**Section 7.** The expenses of the Committee including per diem, subsistence, travel allowances for Committee members, and contracts for professional or consultant services shall be paid upon the written approval of the Speaker of the House of Representatives pursuant to G.S. 120-32.02(c) and G.S. 120-35 from funds available to the House of Representatives for its operations. Individual expenses of \$5,000 or less, including per diem, travel, and subsistence expenses of members of the Committee, and clerical expenses shall be paid upon the authorization of the Co-Chairs of the Committee. Individual expenses in excess of \$5,000 shall be paid upon the written approval of the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

**Section 8.** The Legislative Services Officer shall assign professional and clerical staff to assist the Committee in its work. The Director of Legislative Assistants of the House of Representatives shall assign clerical support staff to the Committee.

**Section 9.** The Committee may meet at various locations around the State in order to promote greater public participation in its deliberations.

**Section 10.** The Committee may submit an interim report on the results of the study, including any proposed legislation, on or before May 1, 2014, by filing a copy of the report with the Office of the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the House



Principal Clerk, and the Legislative Library. The Committee may submit a final report on the results of its study, including any proposed legislation, to the members of the House of Representatives prior to the convening of the 2015 General Assembly by filing the final report with the Office of the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the House Principal Clerk, and the Legislative Library. The Committee terminates upon the convening of the 2015 General Assembly or upon the filing of its final report, whichever occurs first.

Effective this the 14th day of November, 2013.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Thom Tillis".

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Thom Tillis  
Speaker

DRAFT

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## DRAFT LEGISLATION

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GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
SESSION 2013

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BILL DRAFT 2013-TCz-29 [v.3] (04/21)

(THIS IS A DRAFT AND IS NOT READY FOR INTRODUCTION)  
4/22/2014 5:56:40 PM

Short Title: Restore School Calendar Educ. Purpose Waiver. (Public)

Sponsors: (Primary Sponsor).

Referred to:

### A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT TO RESTORE THE SCHOOL CALENDAR EDUCATIONAL PURPOSE WAIVER TO PROVIDE FLEXIBILITY TO LOCAL BOARDS OF EDUCATION FOR CALENDAR MODIFICATIONS NECESSARY TO ACCOMMODATE SPECIFIC PROGRAMS FOR A REASONABLE EDUCATIONAL PURPOSE, AS RECOMMENDED BY THE HOUSE STUDY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION INNOVATION.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

#### **SECTION 1. G.S. 115C-84.2(d) reads as rewritten:**

"(d) Opening and Closing Dates. – Local boards of education shall determine the dates of opening and closing the public schools under subdivision (a)(1) of this section. Except for year-round schools, the opening date for students shall be no earlier than the Monday closest to August 26, and the closing date for students shall be no later than the Friday closest to June 11. On a showing of good cause, the State Board of Education may waive the requirement that the opening date for students be no earlier than the Monday closest to August 26 and may allow the local board of education to set an opening date no earlier than the Monday closest to August 19, to the extent that school calendars are able to provide sufficient days to accommodate anticipated makeup days due to school closings. A local board may revise the scheduled closing date if necessary in order to comply with the minimum requirements for instructional days or instructional time. For purposes of this subsection, the term "good cause" means that schools in any local school administrative unit in a county have been closed eight days per year during any four of the last 10 years because of severe weather conditions, energy shortages, power failures, or other emergency situations.

The State Board also may waive this requirement for an educational purpose. The term "educational purpose" means a local school administrative unit establishes a need

to adopt a different calendar for (i) a specific school to accommodate a special program offered generally to the student body of that school, (ii) a school that primarily serves a special population of students, or (iii) a defined program within a school. The State Board may grant the waiver for an educational purpose for that specific school or defined program to the extent that the State Board finds that the educational purpose is reasonable, the accommodation is necessary to accomplish the educational purpose, and the request is not an attempt to circumvent the opening and closing dates set forth in this subsection. The waiver requests for educational purposes shall not be used to accommodate system-wide class scheduling preferences.

The required opening and closing dates under this subsection shall not apply to any school that a local board designated as having a modified calendar for the 2003-2004 school year or to any school that was part of a planned program in the 2003-2004 school year for a system of modified calendar schools, so long as the school operates under a modified calendar."

**SECTION 2.** This act is effective when it becomes law, and applies beginning with the 2015-2016 school year.

DRAFT